

Bobcat Harvest 2002

By Brian Dhuey, Bruce Kohn and John Olson

Abstract

The 2002 Wisconsin bobcat harvest was 253 including 22 taken off reservation by native hunters/trappers. The non-treaty harvest included 116 bobcats that were trapped, 90 shot over dogs, 25 taken incidental to other types of hunting/trapping, and 9 taken with method of harvest unrecorded. The counties of highest harvest were Iron (30), Price (30), Forest (22), and Ashland (20). The sex ratio from registration data was 0.84 males to 1 female, while the sex ratio from carcass collection was 1.08 males per female.

Background

Pils and Bluett (1984) discussed the background of Wisconsin's bobcat harvest management system and Dhuey, et al. (2002) described the results of the 2001 bobcat trapping season. Wisconsin's bobcat season runs from mid-October to the end of December in that portion of the State north of Highway 64. All hunters and trappers must obtain a special harvest permit before pursuing bobcats, and the annual bag limit is one bobcat per person. The application fee for bobcat harvest permits is \$3.00, and successful applicants are selected by random drawing.

Methods

All bobcats must be registered by DNR Law Enforcement personnel and their carcasses turned over to the DNR for research purposes. The area of kill (county and deer management unit), date of kill, sex of the animal, method of harvest, and the name and address of the hunter or trapper were recorded for each bobcat registered. These data were entered into the DNR UNIX computer by district personnel and summarized using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS). All bobcat carcasses collected were examined to document the sex and age structure of the harvest, and to determine reproductive and mortality rates in the population.

Results

A total of 5,297 hunters and trappers applied for 1,330 bobcat harvest permits available in 2002 (Table 1). The season ran from 19 October through 31 December, with 253 bobcats being harvested. This included tribal, non-tribal, and incidental bobcat kills. This was an increase from the 2001 total of 152 bobcats, and above the 1980-2001 average of 175.

Forty-eight percent of the bobcats killed in 2002 were trapped and 38% were shot over dogs (Table 2). In 2001, 51% of the bobcats were taken over dogs and 37% were trapped. Bobcats taken incidental to other hunting/trapping activities comprised 10% of the harvest. Method of harvest was unrecorded for 9 bobcats harvested.

In 2002, Chippewa hunters/trappers took 22 bobcats on ceded lands (data provided by Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission; Jonathan Gilbert, June 2003 memo). Seven bobcat were registered with a kill location on a Wisconsin reservation. These kills are included in the statewide totals.

Bobcats killed incidentally are registered with the WDNR. In 2002, 7 bobcats were registered as incidental kills. Six of the seven incidental kills were road kills.

The average pelt price for bobcats in 2002 (\$46.31; ranged from \$35 to \$80) was higher than in 2001 (\$41.81), and much lower than during the early-mid 80's period (Table 1). It appears that bobcat pelt prices have stabilized over the past 4-5 years.

Iron and Price counties led all other counties with a harvest of 30, followed by Forest(22), and Ashland(20)(Fig. 1). Deer Management Unit 28 had the highest harvest at 30, followed by units 25 (15), and 26 and 32 (12)(Fig. 2).

Weather conditions, particularly the number of days with new snowfall, can have a major effect on the success rate of bobcat hunters/trappers. Weather conditions during the 2002 bobcat season were less than ideal because of little or no snow cover during December. The easy access to woodlands and warmer than average temperature may have contributed to an increase in trapping activity. Hunters may have also aggressively pursued bobcats when snow was present.

Carcasses were obtained from 162 of the 253 bobcats killed in 2002. The sex ratio of carcasses examined was 1.08 males per 1 female. The WDNR Furbearer Advisory Committee has recommended a harvest goal of 290 bobcats for the 2003 season.

Literature Cited

Dhuey B. B. Kohn and J. Olson.
2001. Bobcat Harvest, 2001. IN: The Wisconsin Wildlife Surveys Report, August 2002. Document on file at the Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources, Bureau of Research, Monona, WI 53716

Pils, C. M. and R. Bluett.
1984. The 1984 Wisconsin bobcat harvest summary. Wis. Dep. of Nat. Resour. 8pp.

Table 1. *Total number of permits issued, bobcats harvested, and average pelt price from 1980 to 2002.*

Year	# of Permits Issued	Total Harvest	Average Pelt Price (\$)
1980	1,840	90	84.00
1981	2,675	208	78.93
1982	2,972	139	70.67
1983	3,214	206	61.91
1984	3,089	260	71.93
1985	4,191	189	61.78
1986	4,064	183	86.55
1987	5,114	247	85.37
1988	5,285	165	55.34
1989	5,051	136	48.08
1990	4,359	98	56.79
1991	2,358	71	35.24
1992	2,300	217	37.52
1993	2,000	160	45.02
1994	2,000	169	36.17
1995	2,000	111	45.47
1996	2,000	166	44.75
1997	2,000	216	43.70
1998	1,860	194	41.25
1999	1,540	187	46.24
2000	1,490	280	41.88
2001	781	152	41.81
2002	1,330	253	46.31

Table 2. *The 2002 Wisconsin bobcat harvest by method of harvest. These data do not include the Chippewa harvest.*

Harvest Method	Number Harvested	Percent Harvested
Trapped	116	48.3%
Shot over Dogs	90	37.5%
Incidental to Other Hunting	25	10.4%
Unrecorded	9	3.8%

Table 3. *The 2002 Wisconsin bobcat harvest goal and applicant results.*

State Harvest Goal*	Applicants	Permits Issued	Tags/ Applicant	Non-tribal, Non-Incidental Harvest	Permit Success Rate
246	5,297	1,330	0.25	217	16%

- Total Wisconsin harvest goal was 280 with an accepted tribal declaration of 34, resulting in the state harvest goal.

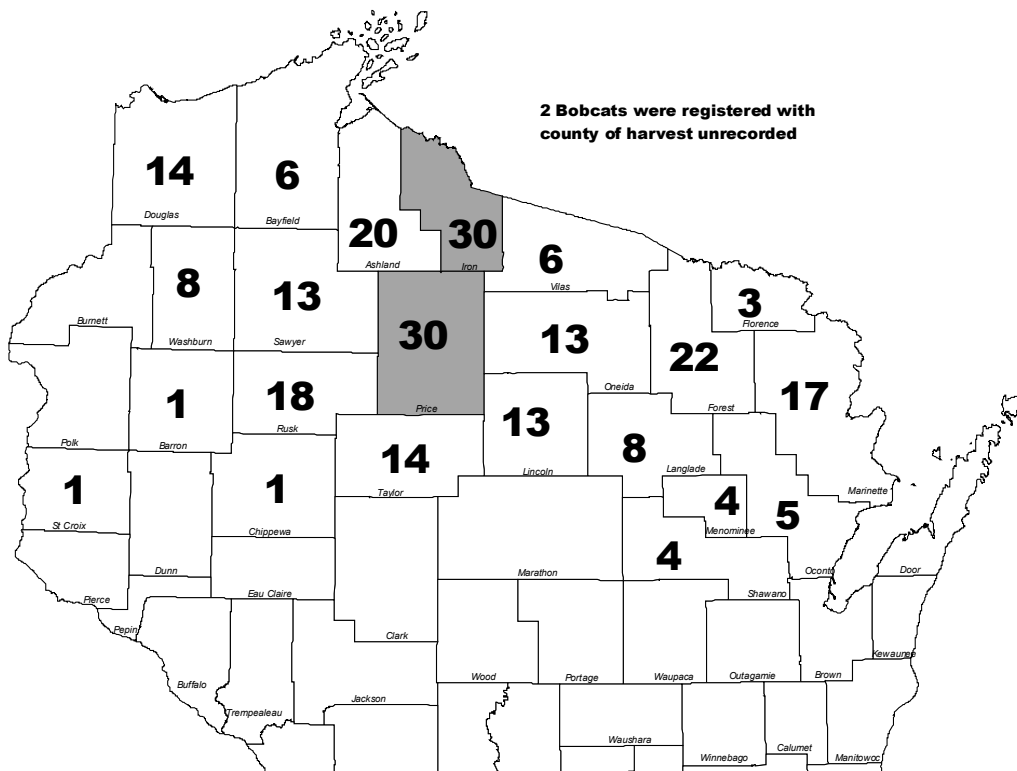


Figure 1. Harvest of Wisconsin bobcats by county during 2002. Shaded area highlights the counties of highest harvest.

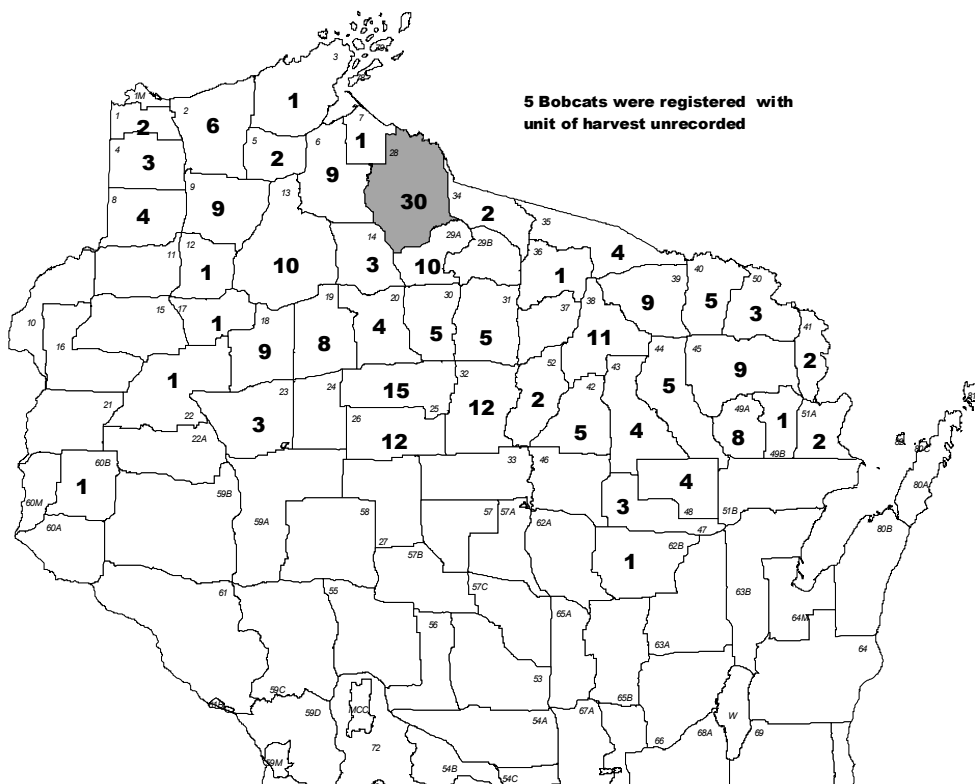


Figure 2. Distribution of the 2002 Wisconsin bobcat harvest by deer management unit. The shaded unit represents the unit of highest harvest.